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SUCCESS STORY

Planting Seeds for Grassroots Development in Southern Kordofan



Government officials attend a participatory planning course at Kadugli's Community Development Center.

USAID/OTI-funded Community Development Centers in Southern Kordofan have created a platform for citizen engagement in the state's development initiatives.

June 2008 – USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) is supporting the innovative efforts of Southern Kordofan's state government to increase citizen engagement in ongoing development initiatives. Despite a wealth of natural resources in the state, which traverses the former frontline of Sudan's north-south civil war, insufficient and inequitable development has generated discontent and driven decades of violent conflict. Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, local reformers created the Ministry of Rural Development and Water Resources (MRDWR) to promote development that reflects the economic and social needs of the state's citizens, thereby helping to secure peace.

In late 2007, USAID/OTI funded the establishment of three Community Development Centers (CDCs) in the provincial capitals of Kadugli, Rashad, and Al Fula. The MRDWR is piloting CDCs as a way to offset centralized development planning, which has long excluded communities from decision-making processes. The centers provide a platform for local authorities to engage communities in discussions on development priorities. In addition, international groups plan to use the centers for training to strengthen government accountability and civic action. USAID/OTI support provided for furniture and equipment as well as the rehabilitation of infrastructure.

At present, 120 officials from the state's 10 ministries are taking part in an ambitious three-month USAID/OTI-funded training course. The course focuses on participatory methods for planning and implementing development projects that are tailored to the needs, priorities, and resources of individual communities. The training also promotes integrated planning and policymaking between the state ministries, which have remained disconnected until now. The MRDWR's bottom-up approach is expected to result in closer collaboration between government authorities, local leaders, and community-based organizations as they develop plans for essential infrastructure and services, including health, water, and education.

For the first time in Southern Kordofan's history, a ministry is applying a community-based approach to improve services for its citizens. USAID/OTI supports the efforts of local authorities to develop a more devolved, legitimate, and effective governance system that counters the root causes of conflict in Sudan.